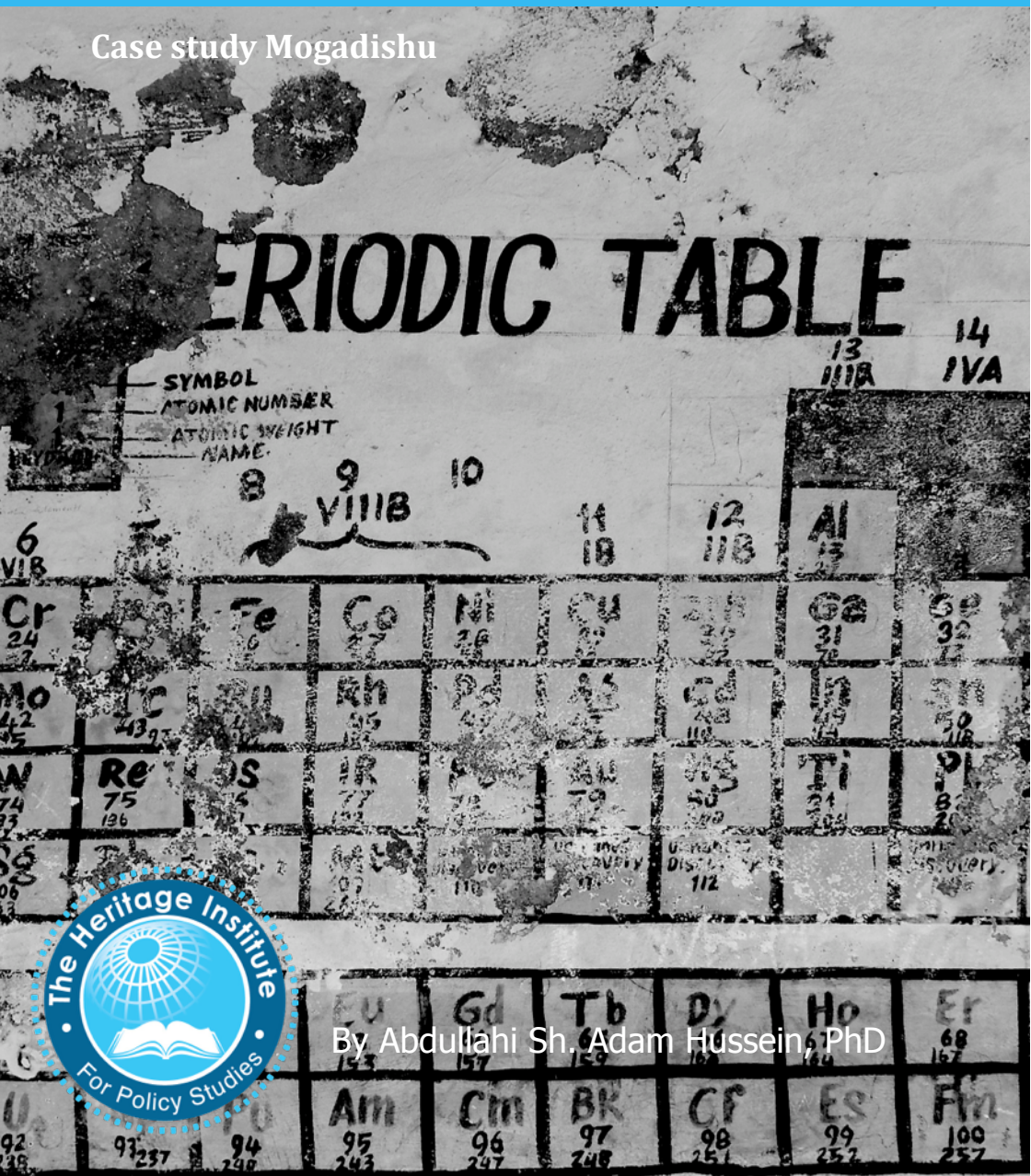


Educational challenges in post-transitional Somalia

Case study Mogadishu



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Table of Contents

Executive summary	4
Curriculum chaos	4
Language policy	4
Teacher-related challenges	5
Background	5
Impacts of war on education	5
Curriculum and policy reforms after conflict	6-7
Methodology and scope of the study	8
Results and discussion	8
Curriculum questions	8
School systems	8
One country/multiple curricula	9-10
Language policy	11
Medium of instruction	11
Universality of English	11
Religious motivation	12
The long-term solution	12
Teacher-related challenges	13
Unqualified teachers	13
Teachers underpaid	13
Teacher shortage	14
Conclusions	15
Policy considerations	15
To the government of Somalia	15
To education umbrellas and headteachers	15
To the general public	15
References	16-17

Executive summary

The study investigated major educational challenges facing Somalia in its post-transitional era. It took place in the Benadir region and focused entirely on formal basic schooling, or the K-12 education system. Qualitative research methods were used, and data were collected through interviews with 32 participants and document analysis.

The study found that Somalia is facing complex and multidimensional challenges in the areas of curriculum, teacher training, school infrastructure, lack of public education, unregulated private education, school finance and untrained educational professionals.

However, the following themes were highlighted by participants as the most pressing challenges facing the education system in general and at the particular schools that took part in the study.

Curriculum chaos

- We found significant variations both in the schooling systems and subjects taught at schools. The four-four-four system in which students spend four years each at primary, intermediate and secondary schools was the most common schooling system. The six-three-three system – six years at primary and three years each at intermediate and secondary levels – was also used by some schools. We also found variations in the number of subjects taught at schools.
- Our study confirms the existence of a number of imported curricula in the country, though it is unclear how many as we were given different figures by the participants. However, our estimate is that there are about

10 different curricula currently in use, mainly from Kenya and the Somali curriculum that was used before the civil war.

- Participants were deeply unhappy about the broken state of the education system and called for it to be fixed. Significantly, they were also fully aware of the shortcomings and implications of using imported curricula, which some participants argued could, in the long-term, destroy the country. Understandably, participants not only argued for the importance of developing a national curriculum, but also provided a detailed picture on what it should consist of.

Language policy

- Not a single school uses the Somali language as their medium of instruction with English and Arabic the preferred languages for various reasons. One school adopted Somali at primary level but then switched to English at secondary level.
- Participants were split on which language should be used. There were advocates for English but also for a mixture of Arabic and English and those who argued for the Somali language to be used as the main medium of instruction.

Teacher-related challenges

- While most teachers who took part in the study were educated to bachelor degree level, very few had studied education-related subjects and therefore lacked the formal teacher training experience necessary for the profession. This means that unqualified teachers without the necessary pedagogical and teaching skills are in classrooms. The study revealed the existence of a form of ‘in-service’ training in most schools (with

the help of the educational umbrellas that formed after the civil war), but the contents of this training and its length and frequency were inadequate and did not cover important issues such as teaching pupils with special educational needs.

- Not a single pay structure was found to be in use, and teachers are grossly underpaid. Some teachers had taken on second jobs to supplement their income. Understandably, they were deeply unhappy about their pay, had low morale and were disillusioned with the profession.

- Teachers, parents and education workers all felt that society no longer values teachers and the teaching profession. The Ministry of Education was particularly worried that the country's brightest and best were not being attracted into teaching.

- The country is facing a serious teacher shortage at all levels of basic education. This has resulted in large classes with up to 50 pupils and a lack of subject specialists (mainly science and maths).

Background

The outbreak of civil war in Somalia in the early 1990s took its toll on the formal education system in the country. School premises were turned into accommodation for the internally displaced people fleeing from the war (Abdi, 1998), and many educated people left the country as refugees (Lindley, 2008). As well as denying a large number of Somalis the opportunity to access education, this relocation of educated people delayed the process of reviving the education system after the war.

The process of reconstruction finally began in the mid-1990s. In the absence of a central

government, dedicated individuals and charity workers assumed the role of providers (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2008). A new education system run by communities and the private sector (i.e., outside government control) emerged as a result (Abdinoo, 2008). These new schools, which were able to provide formal and somewhat rudimentary educational opportunities to Somali pupils, organised themselves under a number of educational umbrellas. This system survived and even expanded under different transitional governments.

Somalia now has an internationally recognised government, which has begun to assert its influence on education. In consultation with education providers, the government is working to develop a national curriculum and come up with policies that will govern the education system.

The aim of this research paper is to systematically document the major educational challenges facing the country in its post-transitional era. It begins by reviewing, briefly, the relevant literature on the steps some countries have taken to revive their education system after armed conflicts. We also present the methodology used for the study and the results. Finally, the paper puts forward specific recommendations to the relevant stakeholders.

Impacts of war on education

Attacks on education and school systems are increasing around the world (O'Malley, 2010). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and other international organizations have taken a keen interest in this subject and have

published a number of studies that highlight and document the devastating and disastrous effects that armed conflict has on schools and the education system in general (O'Malley, 2007; UNESCO, 2010). UNESCO pointed out that some parts of the world are “becoming deadly places in which to be a student, teacher or education official” (O'Malley, p. 13). International figures have consequently called on the need to enforce existing international law and legal obligations to “protect education during times of armed conflict and insecurity” (Al-Missned, 2010, p. 148).

Broadly speaking, literature suggested at least three ways in which armed conflicts directly affect schools and education in general. Damage to learning spaces and infrastructures are the most consistently reported, including their total destruction or being “used by armed forces or armed groups”(Al-Missned, 2010, p. 147). The UK's Department for International Development (DFID), for instance, reported that during the Mozambique civil war in the 1970s and 1980s, schools were increasingly the targets of military activity (DFID, 2001). Schools met with similar physical destruction during the Rwandan civil war and the subsequent genocide in 1994 as they were “destroyed, burned, looted and pillaged, and their vehicles stolen”, with 65 percent of the 1,836 schools damaged (Obura, 2003, p. 47). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, over half of all school buildings in the country were reportedly damaged or destroyed.

Beyond the physical destruction of school infrastructure is a human tragedy that directly affects pupils, teachers and administrators. Children are disproportionately affected by war as they are “often fighting, fleeing, or hiding from conflict”(Sommers, 2002, p. 6). Even after wars eventually end and the sounds

of guns stop, children continue to suffer the effects in the form of trauma due to the violence they witnessed.

Finally, war also takes its toll on teachers who could be taking part as combatants or are killed (Obura, 2003). It was reported that in Rwanda “75 percent of teachers in 1994 were either killed or are now in jail for alleged participation in the genocide” (Hodgkin, 2006, p. 200). On this basis, the World Bank considers the shortage of qualified teachers a legacy of war (World Bank, 2002).

Measures to protect schools have been offered by researchers, including short-term steps such as providing physical protection for schools and those linked to them. However, the long-term solution for the protection of education lies with education itself (O'Malley, 2010; Sinclair, 2010; UNICEF, 2011). Importantly, education can also be a source of, and a contributor to, conflict (Bush & Salterelli, 2000; Sinclair, 2010; UNICEF, 2011). Therefore, reforming the education system is a vital step to ensuring that it prevents future conflicts and contributes to peace, which is a prerequisite for the economic and social development of any nation.

Curriculum and policy reforms after conflict

Experts and commentators point out that countries in conflict share, among other things, a curriculum that is “often outdated and teaching styles [that] are authoritarian” (Sinclair, 2010, p. 282). Indeed, the education system, particularly the curriculum, could have been the reason why conflict was instigated in the first place. Paulson, for instance, pointed out that “curriculum review, revision, and reform are among the educational

responses commonly employed in post-conflict situations” (Paulson, 2011, p. 5). Reforming an existing curriculum, which involves removing subjects, correcting errors and adding new subjects, is cheaper than developing a whole new curriculum. Developing a curriculum is a long-term target. It could take years before a new one emerges.

For this reason, some leading scholars in the field have called for the gradual reform of a curriculum “to ensure national consensus is reached”(Rose & Greeley, 2006, p. 9). This gradual reform could start by suspending teaching subjects such as history and removing textbooks that might be inflammatory in the language they use or pictures they display (Sinclair, 2002; Rose & Greeley, 2006; UNESCO, 1999). The question on how to teach history is one of the greatest curriculum challenges that countries face in post-conflict situations. After emerging from conflicts, it is common for people to have different views as to what happened, why and who were the victims.

The most drastic move in recent history with regard to reforming curricula in a post-conflict era took place in Rwanda. When the Rwandan Patriotic Front came to power after the genocide of 1994, the government suspended teaching history to Rwandan children for up to 10 years (Freeman et al., 2008; Obura, 2003).

Reforming educational policies is yet another important issue to be given due consideration in post-conflict countries rebuilding their education systems. Afghanistan, for instance, produced a whole new educational policy based on its first National Educational Strategic Plan (2007). They emphasise, among other things, access to and quality of education. Providing access for all children is

at the heart of these policies. Indeed, there is an overemphasis on this (National Education Strategic Plan, 2007). This is understandable given that access to education, particularly for girls, was prevented by the Taliban regime. Therefore, the new policy is meant to respond to this. It focuses on improving the quality of education “to meet international standards”. Most significantly, “Islamic principles and values” are also mentioned, with both policies aimed at correcting the Taliban regime’s educational approach.

In post-conflict Rwanda, the general government policy of national unity, reconciliation and healing has been firmly instituted within the education system. From the national to the local levels, the aims of education, the learning agenda and the hidden curriculum have been systematically reformulated (Hodgkin, 2006). The new policies focus on the similarities among all Rwandans rather than their differences, and the focus is on a progressive future driven by the traditional values of ubumwe (unity, solidarity) and ubupfura (nobility, goodness, courage and respect for ancestors) (Obura, 2003). The slogan “we are all one Rwandan” has spread through many channels in wider society, including the media (Freeman et al., 2008).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina an education reform strategy was launched after the Dayton Peace Agreement. The reform strategy was meant to tackle ethnic tensions in the country and to prevent future ethnic conflict. It emphasised, among other things, providing a high quality education in integrated multicultural schools free from any political, religious, cultural and other prejudices and discrimination (Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia & Herzegovina, 2004).

Methodology and scope of the study

Qualitative research approaches were adopted by this study, because the researcher did not want to predetermine the participants' answers, but rather wanted to explore how the participants viewed the matters that were under investigation.

In total, 32 participants took part and interviews were carried out between March 2013 and November 2014. Interviews were conducted with seven teachers, 10 headteachers, four heads of educational umbrellas, seven parents, two senior staff in the Ministry of Education and representatives of two international organisations. The Education Act, which the Prime Minister's cabinet approved in the summer of 2014, as well as draft educational policies produced by the Ministry of Education (MoE), were also reviewed and analysed. The study strictly followed ethical guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004) for conducting social research. We used ethical steps such as briefing of the study, rights of withdrawal and assurance of anonymity.

This study took place in the Benadir region where most of the participants were based, and the findings should be seen as a reflection of only the views of those who took part. The focus of the study is yet another important limitation to bear in mind when reading the findings. It focused entirely on formal basic schooling, or K-12, and did not investigate other forms or levels of education that might exist in the country.

Results and discussion

The study found that the Somali education system faces complex and multidimensional challenges that include:

- the safety and security of teachers, pupils and parents
- poor school facilities and infrastructure
- a near lack of public education
- an unregulated private education system
- financing
- untrained educational professionals and lack of training opportunities to upgrade their skills
- poor language policy
- challenges relating to the curriculum.

A leader for an education umbrella pointed out that the educational challenges that the country is facing were so numerous that they “cannot be counted”. It is therefore beyond the scope of this paper to discuss all of them. Only three major themes consistently mentioned by the participants of the study are therefore discussed – the curriculum, language policy and teacher-related challenges.

Curriculum questions

School systems

The study found significant variation in the school systems in the country. We also found a variation in the number of subjects taught in schools. The most popular school system in the country is one that sees students spend four years each in primary, intermediate and secondary schools (the four-four-four system). It is likely that those currently working in the Somali education system have either been through this system themselves or have worked within it, which might explain its popularity. We also found that a six-three-three system, six years in primary, then three years each at the intermediate and secondary levels, is in place.

Further variations were found in the number of subjects taught in schools. The majority were found to teach seven subjects at the primary and intermediate levels, with 11 subjects for secondary pupils. Other schools were found to teach a different number of courses altogether such as seven (primary), nine (intermediate), and 12 (secondary) subjects. We also found eight subjects for primary students, 10 for intermediate and 12 for secondary pupils.

These variations in the school systems as well as the subjects taught have been a source of frustration for some. One headteacher pointed out that “the general educational policy has been lost. Each person will teach what he or she wants to teach.” The participant added that “exams are not unified. The timetable and school calendars are not unified”, suggesting that variation between schools goes beyond the system and subjects taught.

These variations have caused problems for pupils who wanted to transfer to a school belonging to a different umbrella group. A headteacher explained that “students who wanted to transfer from a school under (name of umbrella is provided) and their transfer was not accepted because they were considered not to have finished primary school until they had completed class nine.” Participants felt that these differences in the schooling systems had a negative impact on the teaching and learning process and said that they require the attention of educational policy makers.

Variations were also found in school opening times, uniforms and holidays as some schools were open during national days such as July 1st. Examination systems are also not unified as yet among schools, though the Ministry of Education officials told us arrangements had

been put in place, with the help of umbrella groups, to set national exams during this academic year 2014. However, as we will see in the next section, schools use different curricula and syllabi so it is not clear how exams could be unified when different umbrella groups teach different subjects to their pupils.

One country/multiple curricula

Our study confirms the existence of a number of imported curricula in the country, though the exact number is unknown as participants gave us different figures. For instance, the head of an education umbrella informed us that there were 24 curricula in the country. Another headteacher put the figure at “more than 10 different curricula” without giving a precise number. Our estimate is that there are around 10 different curricula imported from 10 countries including Kenya, India, Pakistan, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. One head of an educational umbrella explained that schools “take units from here and there and that is how they produce their books”, mixing curricula from different countries. Some schools even change curricula from one grade to another.

Two curricula were found to be the most popular in the country: the Somali national curriculum developed by the last central government that collapsed in 1991 and one from Kenya. Of these two, the Somali curriculum was the most widely used.

The popularity of the Kenyan curriculum can be attributed to the geographical proximity of Kenya to Somalia making it easier for education workers to get hold of copies. A head of an education umbrella stated, “Kenya ... is the closest to us”. Another factor is that large numbers of Somalis sought refuge in Kenya as a

result of the civil war and probably had first-hand experience with the Kenyan system. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the Kenyan curriculum is in English. Since most of the schools that took part in the study used English as their medium of instruction, it may not have been a difficult decision for education workers to adopt the Kenyan model.

Participants were well aware of the shortcomings of an imported curriculum. A participant from a school that uses the Kenyan curriculum argued that it “addresses its own culture, norms and geography,” suggesting that education is value-led rather than value free. One head of an umbrella group was more specific about the cultural connotations of imported curricula, pointing out that “a Kenyan book will have [Kenyan names such as] ‘Kdoge’ and ‘Umbiya’ but it will not say ‘Sarah’ and ‘Mohamed’.” Another participant (the deputy chairperson of an umbrella group) believed that imported curricula could have long-term implications that could eventually “destroy” Somalia. “There are different ways to destroy a community. It is not always done via the gun. If you want to destroy a community, then you can do it via their curriculum.”

Though this may be an exaggeration, it is clear that there are two systems of education – one intended to empower pupils and another that aims to maintain the status quo. Freire (1970) described a banking style-based education and problem-posed education. According to Freire the first form of education is used by oppressors to continue their control over a society, while the second is intended to liberate and empower individuals. As highlighted in the literature review, education is like a double-edged sword and requires careful, evidence-based planning.

Our participants not only argued for the importance of developing a national curriculum, but also provided a detailed picture of how a future Somali curriculum should look. It should be based on the country’s own “culture and religion”, according to one headteacher, and include subjects such as peace education.

“Somalis have always been in conflict in one way or another, whether they have fought over water, land or women. Somali history has always been in upheaval,” pointed out the head of an education umbrella. The emphasis on peace education as part of a new Somali curriculum was consistently mentioned by participants, showing their confidence in the positive role that education can play in contributing and sustaining peace, concurring with the relevant literature in the field (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Elmi, 2010; UNICEF, 2011).

Education workers such as umbrella groups were seen by participants as currently filling the gap vacated by the central government. “You can guess what would happen if everyone waited for a government in the education sector,” said one respondent.

All our participants, without exception, expressed their deep unhappiness about Somalia’s broken education system and called on the government to take action and produce a national curriculum. The leader of one educational umbrella stated that the current curriculum “is not a curriculum that we are satisfied with and it is not a curriculum that meets the needs of Somali students.”

“It is the government that can provide education. It is not a private business or something that can be done by individuals,” said one headteacher.

But progress has been slow. The Ministry of Education, in consultation with local stakeholders, has been taking steps to produce an educational policy and unified curriculum. This process began a few years ago, however, and its draft educational policies and the Education Act have not yet been approved by parliament.

Language policy

Medium of instruction

Our findings indicate that schools use a mixture of languages with English and Arabic the languages of choice for the majority. In the schools that took part in our study, English was the most popular language, followed by Arabic. A limited number of schools that are under the full control of the government reportedly use the Somali language, but their number is negligible compared to the private schools that are growing in numbers every year. Even in government schools, Somali is meant to be used only at primary levels. According to the draft educational policy, English or Arabic could be used at secondary schools.

Not a single school in this study was found to use Somali as its medium of instruction. One school adopted Somali at the primary level but switched to English for secondary students. Further investigation revealed that unlike other schools, it received financial support from an international organisation, indicating that it was in a relatively secure financial position compared with other schools that took part. Worth pointing out, however, is that even schools that use foreign languages still teach Somali literature to pupils in the Somali language.

When asked why they use foreign languages to teach students, participants listed the universality of English and religious motivation (in the case of Arabic) as the main reasons.

Universality of English

Many participants said English is an international language and that studying in English would open up opportunities for students outside the country and allow them to compete with international students. One headteacher said, "It would be easier for the students as universities teach in English." Another headteacher said, "We picked English so that our students can compete with students all over the world."

Studying in English at a basic education level would help pupils' future employability, according to some participants. "You're more likely to find employment if you can speak English," said one headteacher, adding that the Somali language was "limited" to the number who speak it. Travelling outside the country and communicating with the outside world when travelling were also given as reasons. "Somali is a language that is being left behind, and Arabic is only spoken in a few countries, but English is considered to be international," said one headteacher.

The use of English also has purely practical advantages. Most schools are private and profit-making enterprises, meaning school managers are in competition with each other for students, and an English-based education system seems to be a good selling point.

Religious motivation

Schools that use Arabic said they want to teach students the Qu’ran and Hadith in their original languages. “We picked the Arabic language, because our students are Somalis and Muslims,” said one headteacher. “Therefore, we want them to learn in Arabic.” Previous researchers have also identified a similar justification for schools using Arabic and imported curricula from Arab Muslim countries (Elmi, 2010).

The long-term solution

Most participants believed the current education system was born out of necessity and improperly planned. It was therefore important to explore participants’ views on the long-term solution to the issue of the medium of instruction as the draft educational policy produced recently by the Ministry of Education appeared to favour the continuation of teaching in foreign languages.

Our participants held different views on the language in which Somali pupils should be taught, which we have broken down into three categories: English, a mixture of Arabic and English and the Somali language.

One advocate of English argued that “all the universities in the world use English. When our students graduate, where will they go? They will go abroad. When they go abroad, it is an obstacle to learn in English. That’s why I think the medium of instruction should be in English.”

Others advocated a mixture of languages and even argued for the possibility of all three co-existing. The chairperson of an umbrella group believes that “primary school should be in Somali, intermediate school in Arabic and secondary school in English.”

Some believed that Somali should be restored as the medium of instruction in all schools. “Firstly, we are Somalis. The Somali language is part of our identity and teaching in Somali is what we need,” said the chairperson of an umbrella group. The leader of another educational umbrella group agreed. “It is no good for us to teach our students in foreign languages.

We need to bring the Somali language back. So I am of the view that we should teach in Somali, then English and Arabic can be complementary. What we need is an academy to work on the Somali language, and academics that can advance and develop it so that it can be taught.”

The draft education law approved by the cabinet in the summer of 2014 suggests the three languages be used with Somali at the primary level and English or Arabic in secondary school. This not only confirms that status quo but also seems to ignore current research findings which overwhelmingly favour using the mother tongue as this significantly improves learning (Benson, 2004; Gacheche, 2010; UNESCO 2006; Kosonen & Young, 2009). Research has shown that pupils using their mother tongue are more likely to engage in lessons and communicate better with their teachers, making it an effective tool for learning (Trudell, 2008). The views expressed by our participants in favour of foreign languages are therefore not in line with the current evidence in the field.

The debate on the medium of instruction has already begun among workers in the education sector but without the involvement of the government or the public. The adoption of a particular language is a policy decision to be taken by a government. However, this decision should be based on research evidence and with an eye to the future, including the implication of language on identity and local culture.

Teacher-related challenges

We identified three major challenges for teachers: lack of teaching qualifications, poor remuneration and teacher shortages.

Unqualified teachers

While most teachers who took part in the study were educated to a bachelor degree level, very few had studied education-related subjects or had any formal teacher training. A headteacher said lack of teacher qualifications is the most pressing educational issue facing the nation. “Teachers are not qualified. They are taken on the basis of, ‘can you be a teacher?’ ‘Can you teach?’ There are few trained teachers who specialise in a subject.” The leader of an education umbrella argued, “what we need are teachers from the faculty of education.”

Business and information technology graduates were found to outnumber those who graduated from faculties of education. Many who ended up in the classroom were originally trained for different professions. “I started working in this school in finance. I was the accountant and the cashier, and then I became a class one teacher,” said one study participant.

The study, however, revealed the existence of ‘in-service’ training in most schools—three to 10 day sessions intended to equip new teachers with the necessary skills. For most, this would be their first experience of formal teacher training. Topics covered included teaching methods, classroom management and lesson planning.

These sessions, mainly organised by education umbrellas, sometimes with help from international organisations, were seen as beneficial but too infrequent and limited in scope. A senior MoE official confirmed that “teachers are given training, but the training does not happen regularly.”

More worrying is the lack of training given to teachers on dealing with students with special educational needs, particularly those whose mental and physical wellbeing has been affected by the war. A number of teachers said they have physically disabled children in their classrooms but worked hard to accommodate them by allowing them to arrive late to school and giving them extra time to complete their exams. “We have got two deaf [students], and we have also got three who are suffering from bad eyesight and one girl and two boys have limps,” said a headteacher, adding they didn’t get special care. Another headteacher pointed out, “We need things that will help those students like Braille.”

Teachers underpaid

Teachers’ pay is one of the major educational challenges facing Somalia. The few who are already in the profession are considering leaving, or have already left, due to poor remuneration and lack of respect from society. Even those who wanted to remain hoped to move into a management role.

One participant, who had been in the profession for over 30 years and pays \$100 per month in rent, earned just \$90 per month. Another teacher who earns \$200 per month said it is not enough for a family to live on and has taken on a second job.

Not a single pay structure was found to be in place in the sector, while salaries varied from one school to another and also within the same school, leading to low morale.

Those working at government schools were reportedly not getting paid regularly. A senior official at the Ministry of Education told us that teachers “sometimes go unpaid for up to three months”. Salaries for teachers who work at government schools come from two sources – the MoE and international donors, though all funds are managed and administered by the ministry. The MoE official said many teachers have already started leaving the profession, which was confirmed by our research.

“I am not interested in being a teacher. There are no incentives to continue to be a teacher. The pay is very bad, and the chances of promotion are very slim,” said one.

“Teaching is not very popular in Somalia,” said the leader of one educational umbrella. “If you say that they will get their degree in teaching for free, it will still not be popular. They prefer subjects like nursing, medicine and engineering. Every parent wants to find a good teacher for their children in schools and universities, but they do not want their children to become teachers.”

Indeed, although some of the parents who took part in the study felt that teachers were respected, none said they would be happy if their children become teachers. “I do not want my children to become teachers,” said one parent. “Teachers are not respected in this country and my children are part of the society and are fully aware about the status of the teachers. So even if I told them to go into teaching they would not listen to me.”

This point was powerfully illustrated by an MoE official who argued that unless underlying issues of pay and respect are addressed fully, the profession will keep losing qualified teachers and find it hard to hire the brightest graduates – a major blow to the education system. “No one in the country is interested in becoming a teacher, because the belief is that teachers are not well paid and not respected in the community and unless these things are fundamentally addressed and tackled no one will join the profession,” the official said.

Teacher shortage

Our research findings indicate that Somalia is facing a serious teacher shortage at all levels of basic education. This shortage can be easily seen in two areas – the teacher-student ratio and the lack of subject specialists in classrooms.

Teachers have a large number of students, sometimes up to 50 pupils per class. One primary school with 560 pupils has only 11 teachers. Another secondary school was found to have 300 students but only seven teachers. Teachers were also found to be working double shifts in order to meet growing demand. “The biggest problem that we have right now is not having enough teachers. There is a need for more teachers,” said a headteacher.

The lack of subject specialists is another common problem. It was found that some teachers were teaching subjects that they hadn’t ever studied themselves such as business or social sciences. “There is a need for qualified teachers, particularly in the scientific subjects,” said a headteacher.

Conclusions

The aim of this exploratory study was to investigate the educational challenges facing post-transitional Somalia. Our investigation revealed that Somalia is experiencing chronic educational challenges that require concerted and collective efforts to address. The study has identified challenges in the areas of curriculum, language policy and teacher training. Though the process of bringing the Somali education system to a functioning level appears to have started through consultation efforts by the current government, this process must be accelerated and made systematic.

Policy considerations

Based on our evidence, we put forward the following policy considerations:

To the government of Somalia

- Assert the government's oversight role and produce policies and legislation that govern the education system. This process should be carried out in consultation with stakeholders but must be led by the government.
- Form a competent and credible national commission tasked with reviewing and developing a national curriculum that responds to the current and future challenges of Somalia.
- Begin establishing a teacher training institute and teacher training programme in consultation with stakeholders and higher education providers.
- Pay teachers a living wage, which must be protected by law.

To education umbrellas and headteachers

- Fully support the government's efforts to reform and reconstruct the education system.
- Improve teachers' pay and respond to their professional development needs. Teachers must receive living wages and be paid regularly at the end of each calendar month.
- Ensure teachers have basic training before they start teaching pupils.

To the general public

- Participate fully and positively in the education debate that has begun in the country.
- Recognize that educating pupils is a partnership in which parents are a major pillar and must participate actively in order to effect change.
- Advocate for the welfare of teachers and offer support for improvements in their living conditions.

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